

live fish, hasn't elicited so much as an appreciative snap of the elongated gar jaws. Next week, the pair, who incidentally are the largest fish in the Aquarium, will have the temperature of their tank raised from 65 to 75 degrees to see if this will increase their appetites. "Not only are they off their feed," Dr. Herald complains, "but they are weighed down with anchor worms." This efflorescence of parasites is contrary to custom with all the other fish in the Steinhart Bowl at this time of year. Established residents lose their anchor worms and other parasites in winter because of the colder water.

#### IDEAL ICHTHYOLOGY

FROM DR. W. I. FOLLETT, Curator of Ichthyology, in the remote reaches of Simson Hall, comes word that the rearranging of specimens has been completed. Formerly an alphabetical shelving, the new groupings are by related families. The Acanthuridae were once shelved next to *Acrania* although any student of fishes knows the former are surgeonfish and the latter are the utterly unrelated lancelets. The new catalogue reveals that the 22-letter *Selachophidichthyoidei* (a group of primitive sharks) is the longest spelling while *Apoda* (eels to you) is the shortest. Ichthyological specimens are kept in either alcohol or formaldehyde. Some of the alcoholics in the department are anonymous, not all being tagged or booked. The smallest container, when filled, holds one-half ounce and the largest, a stone crock, weighs 25 lbs., tare, and 105 lbs., when filled with alcohol and a sturgeon, doubled and redoubled to get him in the jar.

Ichthyology and the Aquarium have a bond closer than being at the opposite ends of the life cycle of fish, in the person of Ralph W. M. Keating. (Mr. K. and his father John A., are both long-time Academy members.) Mr. Ralph, who is administrative officer on one of the many ships that ply between San Francisco and the Orient and who had often brought pickled fish to Dr. Follett, has recently given the Aquarium its only fishes from Guam. More than this, he has also added a series of *Therapon* from Manila. These small striped finny friends double their size every two weeks. "They are the darndest things for eating brine shrimp," a battery attendant remarked recently.

#### TICKING OFF THE SARDINES

A CITATION for close coöperation goes to Dr. W. Barclay Stephens, Honorary Curator of Horology, and Thomas Groody, marine biologist who is making a study of sardines. The casual observer might find scant relationship here. In his observations of sardine behavior (in a tank which is a story in itself), Mr. Groody needed to measure five-second intervals. "I can't watch my watch and watch the sardines as the same time," he lamented. A metronome wouldn't do. What he really needed was an alarm clock that would ring every five seconds. Dr. Stephens hand-machined some gears, hooked up a small electric motor, and devised a timer that gently bongs at the proper and required interval. As long as the contrivance is plugged in, it keeps tapping out the time. The science of sardines swims on!

# ACADEMY NEWS LETTER

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Photograph courtesy National Audubon Society

OWL IN BLOOM  
(See page 2)

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# CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

GOLDEN GATE PARK • SAN FRANCISCO

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## January Announcement

THE REGULAR JANUARY MEETING of the California Academy of Sciences will be held in North American Hall, West Wing of the Academy buildings in Golden Gate Park, on Friday evening, January 6, 1950, at 8 o'clock. Alice and Harold Allen, headliners in the National Audubon Society Screen Tours, will present a movie and performance,

### SOUNDS OF THE SAGELAND

This unique presentation by two unusual artists will be an innovation in wildlife programs. In conjunction with a color motion picture, the Allens will feature interpretations of sageland sounds using sound effects, with Harold Allen imitating bird songs.

Alice Allen has been a featured radio artist on national networks. Her successful career includes music, and the writing and staging of musical productions and radio programs. Harold Allen is a leading sound effects man in Hollywood and has been associated with such stars as Melvyn Douglas, Frederic March, Nino Martini, and Frank Morgan. The Allens' program, in action, color, and sound, is built around a love of the out-of-doors and the need for conserving nature's riches.

Those who may have thought of the sagelands as deserts, void of vegetation and scarcely inhabited, will be surprised to see the wealth of animal and plant life to be found there. Not only is the desert a land of vegetation but the wealth of color and variety in such technicolor shots as the desert lily, yellow mallow bush, California and prickly poppies, smoke and Joshua trees, and the hummingbird plant, are a surprise and delight, say the Allens.

"After the Allens' show," writes an enthusiastic member of an earlier audience this year, "the land of sage seemed far from idle. It was very much inhabited, very full of color, full of life."

The public is cordially invited.

### RANDOM ROUNDUP

VISITORS OF NOTE at the Academy recently have been international. Ira N. Gabrielson, former chief of the Fish and Wildlife Service and now head of Wildlife Management Institute, Washington, D.C., stopped at the Department of Ornithology this month. Gabe, as he is familiarly known, took a look at the collection of Alaskan birds in search of material for a monograph on same. Ellis Troughton, mammalogist of The Australian Museum, visited Joseph Slevin, Curator of Herpetology, on his way home from London and the Lake Success meetings on natural resources.

The Director's log includes Professor L. R. Richardson of Victoria University College, Wellington, New Zealand; and Dr. J. M. Cruxent, Director del Museo de Ciencias Naturales, Caracas, Venezuela.

[ 2 ]

### OF RARE BOOKS

A NOTABLE ACCESSION to the Library is an 1826 work of four hundred and fifty-two lithographs of natural history. Dr. Albert Goldfuss, professor at the Royal University at Bonn, known more for his great work on the fossils of central Europe (*Petrefacta Germaniae*), published his *Naturhistorischen Atlases* in Düsseldorf one hundred and twenty-three years ago. The Academy's recently acquired set of this important work, folio size but not quite elephant, and pointing up the Library's housing problem, comes from the Royal College of Surgeons of England. Exceedingly rare, our four volumes of plates and four companion volumes of text constitute the only set in this region. Apart from its scientific importance, the handsome blue-bound books are outstanding examples of the art of lithography which flourished from 1800 until the late 1860's.

John Thomas Howell, Curator of Botany, daily expects word from the University of California Press of the release date for his *Marin Flora, a Manual of the Flowering Plants and Ferns of Marin County, California*. All Mr. Howell knows now is that the 325-page volume, illustrated with photographs by Charles Townsend, will cost \$4.50. He hopes it will show in bookstalls by January 1, late for Christmas trade perhaps, but in time to start the New Year right. End of flowering commercial.

### OF SPECIES AND SPECIMENS

HARVARD GOES IN FOR SPECIES and the California Academy of Sciences for series, says Joseph Slevin. Mr. Slevin means, in this particular, Australian reptiles, of which the Academy collection, running to more than six thousand, is one of the two most important in the country. The companion-competitor group is at Cambridge, aforementioned. For example, the Academy is long on geckos, nocturnal lizards, of which there are more than a thousand at hand.

Cecil Tose, head of the Department of Exhibits, and his staff report they will be "ready to go" with four large groups of the Simson African material as soon as the new building is complete to receive them. The big displays, Cape Buffalo, Bongo, Greater Kudu, and a group of South African Mammals, are now ready for the background artists and will complete, when installed, the series of large dioramas for the African story begun with the opening of Simson African Hall in 1934.

### OF STUDENTS AND GARS

THE STUDENT MEMBERS, who prefer to be called that, and not "Juniors," have recently acquired an aquarium-full of sea slugs. Joan Steinberg, who has a knack for nudibranchs, found these crawling on sea lettuce at low tide on Moss Beach, not long since. The daintily colored slugs are often called "mobile flowers of the sea," say the Student Members. This lively Academy adjunct now has Student Curators who, to fill these posts, must take an examination. Furthermore the "chairs" are not filled unless a qualified student is available. There are presently four Student Curators.

The alligator gars in the Aquarium haven't eaten a thing since their arrival in San Francisco. This hunger strike, in its fifth week, has Dr. Earl Herald stumped. Dangling tantalizing morsels such as wriggling worms, fresh fish, dead fish, and

[ 3 ]